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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the reflections of preservice art teachers through dialogue journaling with university supervisors. Journal writing is used to encourage students to practice writing intelligently about their concerns and experiences, in a nonthreatening format where content is more important than structure. Students have two notebooks; they write entries in one of them weekly, while the alternate journal that contains the previous week's entries is read and responded to by the university supervisor. At weekly seminar meetings, the journals are exchanged. Journal assignments are usually open-ended, though occasionally a topic is assigned, such as managing children with special needs or dealing with administrative difficulties. The instructions to the students are to write about classroom issues and events that are troublesome or enigmatic. Analysis of students' journal entries are categorized as: (1) reflective and current thoughts, relating to personal situations, the teaching situation, and weekly seminars; and (2) projected thoughts that pertain to the future (the remainder of student teaching or future teaching situations). The most frequently mentioned theme was that of behavior and class management issues. Several students use illustrations of themselves or other school-related objects or people in their journals. Supervisors' responses generally include congratulations, commiseration, and suggestions. (Contains 26 references.) (JDD)

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Dialogue Journaling with Preservice Art Teachers

A Study by Three University Supervisors in Art Education

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A Presentation of the Arts and Learning SIG

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Dialogue Journaling with Preservice Art Teachers

Examining the reflections of preservice art teachers through dialogue journaling with university supervisors is the focus of this study. Our process of dialogue journaling consists of student teachers keeping journals of concerns and issues that emerge during student teaching paired with university supervisors responses to those concerns and issues. Although we compare dialogue journaling with art students, to studies that used journaling with students in general education, we have identified journaling's specific contribution to students in art education. Our intention is to provide grist for a discussion about dialogue journaling in art education and to present the experiences and reflections of three researchers who have been involved in critically analyzing that process.

Although this study is written by and from the perspective of three university supervisors (specifically, the faculty coordinator of student teaching and two graduate teaching associates), we attempt to include the voices of the student teachers involved through the use of their on-going reflections and journal entries. The students have offered their journals as data for the study willingly.

Some Theoretical Underpinnings

Because teacher education has become a focus of both private and public debate, many experimental programs in teacher education are emerging. In response to reports such as the National Commission on Excellence in Education's "A

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Nation At Risk" (1983). The Carnegie's "A Nation Prepared" (1986) and the Holmes Group's "Tomorrow's Teachers" (1986) and "Tomorrow's Schools" (1990), case studies of methods in teacher preparation have become a common method to study the process of learning to teach (Borko & Livingston, 1988; Grossman 1987). Additionally, studies that have focused on encouraging reflective practice in teachers have received attention as a way to effectively monitor and understand classroom events (Nolan & Huber, 1989; Richardson, 1990; Sykes, 1986) and have become a part of many teacher education program reforms.

Reflective teaching is conceptually synonymous with teacher-as-researcher, inquiry-oriented teacher education, teacher-as-decision-maker, and many other similar terms. It is generally seen as teaching as a self-directive process that is critically analyzed. Most all who write about it agree that reflective teaching has roots in the 1933 writings of Dewey (Richardson, 1990). The literature that has evolved on the topic of reflective teaching and the resulting programmatic considerations for teacher education is remarkable. Tom (1992) claims that this is not merely a faddish infatuation but that the interest in reflective teacher education is in response to a lack of faith in teacher effectiveness research that failed to uncover the one "best method" of teaching.

Bullough and Stokes (1994) examine the importance of building personal teaching metaphors as a component of

becoming a reflective teacher. Students in their study wrote life-histories and developed metaphors to use in personal stories of teaching. Grimmett and McKinnon (1992) acknowledge, however, that focusing on metaphor might be an appropriate strategy for a "linguistically inclined student teacher" (p. 434). They suggest that visually inclined students might benefit from focusing on images of teaching. Thus, many art students might be more inclined to create images along with text to communicate their reflections.

Some researchers in general education have cited either individual cases (Fishman & Raver, 1989; Bolin, 1988) or small groups (Richert, 1990) who have benefitted from reflective journal writing during student teaching. These studies have suggested that the process of dialogue journaling is generally a positive experience that encourages critical thinking about teaching. In art education, Packard (1993) used dialogue journals in an introductory course in preservice art education to assess students cognitive development. Stout (1993) advocates the use of dialogue journals with high school-aged students in art classrooms to encourage critical reflection and writing skills across the curriculum. She cautions that the journal should not be used merely for "free association or catharsis (p. 40)" but for true critical inquiry into the meaning of art.

Other studies that examine teacher education within art education have focused on collaborating with cooperating

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teachers (Galbraith. 1993; Schiller & Hanes. in press), the notion of encouraging the development of inquiry oriented art teachers (Galbraith, 1988; May. 1993). discipline specific approaches to classroom management (Ellingson, 1991), and the position that art educators should work closely with their colleagues in general education (Schiller, 1992). Compared with the wealth of studies in general education that address preservice issues, art education has just begun to break the ice with regard to preservice topics (Zimmerman, 1994).

What Good is Dialogue Journaling for Preservice Art Students?

Because we are artists, many of us have used our art as communication in lieu of writing. However, writing is a skill that must be addressed for those of us who enter the teaching profession. Journal writing can be a non-threatening way to practice writing skills as content is more important than structure. As teacher educators we need to find ways to encourage our students to write intelligently about their concerns and experiences. The following describes our use of dialogue journaling with preservice art educators and our analysis of the process.

Our Methods in Dialogue Journaling

Dialogue journal writing has been an integral part of our relationship building process with student teachers for the past two years. We have recently begun to examine our methods and the students' responses more critically in an

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attempt to further develop our understanding of the needs of our students. Our system for dialogue journaling is structured in a weekly cycle. Students have two notebooks and write entries in one of them during the week. the alternate journal that contains the previous week's entries is read and responded to by the university supervisor. The supervisors journal with each of the five or six students that they supervise. At weekly seminar meetings the journals are exchanged, giving the supervisor the opportunity to respond to a new set of reflections. The student teachers can then both read the supervisors responses and begin to write new entries.

Our journal assignments are usually open-ended. The instructions to the students are to write about classroom issues and events that are troublesome or enigmatic; including their relationship with their students and cooperating teachers, curriculum planning, classroom management, and other issues as they emerge. The students are instructed to refrain from merely giving a description of the lessons they teach, and write about things that are troubling them, or issues with which they are wrestling. The students are asked to make two to three entries a week. Entries vary from many hand written pages to short paragraphs.

Recently, we have begun to assign an occasional topic for the students to respond to in their journals. These topics have included managing children with special needs in

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the art classroom, dealing with administrative difficulties in the school, examining the reasons why a particular lesson went well, and judging what reforms are needed in the public school system. The assigned topic entries tend to elicit diverse responses. Part of our study focused on evaluating the impact of assigned as opposed to open-ended journal assignments.

Most of the journal entries come from the daily activities of the students as they happen to choose them. Themes and issues that were addressed repeatedly were identified and analyzed to gain a better understanding of students most salient concerns and their understanding of the complex nature of teaching.

Our Analysis of the Journal Entries

The journal entries of our students can be roughly divided into two general categories; 1) reflective and current thoughts and 2) projected thoughts that pertained to the immediate or distant future (see fig. 1). In the category of reflective and current thoughts there were three broad sets of reflections that we call a) dialogue pertaining to personal situations and b) dialog pertaining to current teaching situation and b) comments about weekly seminar. An example of an entry in set (a), personal situations, would be the following:

> I have a headache. I hope I get this "teachers voice" that we've been talking about. I'm tired. I really need to fix my sleep schedule so I can wake up in time and not be tired by 12:30.

Set (b), current teaching, would provide a response such as:

TAXONOMY OF THE PARTS OF A STUDENT TEACHER JOURNAL

STUDENT TEACHER JOURNAL ENTRIES	REFLECTIVE AND CURRENT THOUGHTS	DIALOGUE RELATED TO PERSONAL SITUATION		PERSONAL ANECDOTES
				IMPROVEMENTS NOTICED
				RESPONSE TO SUPERVISOR'S JOURNAL COMMENTS
				SELF DOUBT AND FEARS
			PERSONAL INFORMATION	STUDENT TEACHER FEELING TIRED & EXHAUSTED
				STUDENT TEACHER BEING PHYSICALLY ILL
				STUD. TEACHER EXPERIENCING MENTAL FATIGUE
				WHY STUDENT WANTED TO BE A TEACHER
		DIALOGUE PERTAINING TO CURRENT TEACHING SITUATION		INFORMATION ABOUT CERTAIN STUDENTS
				COMMENTS ABOUT COOPERATING TEACHER
				CLASSROOM ANECDOTES
				QUESTIONS FOR THE SUPERVISOR
			MANAGEMENT	CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT
				BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT
				LESSON PLANNING STRATEGIES
				COMMENTS ABOUT PREPAREDNESS TO TEACH BASED ON OSU COURSES
		COMMENTS ABOUT WEEKLY SEMINAR		
	PROJECTED THOUGHTS	FUTURE PREPARATIONS AND PLANNING STRATEGIES FOR CLASSES DURING S. T. EXPERIENCE		
		DIALOGUE PERTAINING TO FUTURE TEACHING SITUATION		WHAT S.T. IS LEARNING NOW THAT WILL BE VALUABLE IN THE FUTURE
				WHAT HE/SHE WILL DO DIFFERENTLY IN FIRST JOB

Figure 1

> It was a very busy day. With so many projects going it's hard work to be ready for each class. Cleaning up and getting ready for the next class is very difficult. The proofing of the printing block is quite messy and hard to clean up. I'm never caught up!

A typical set (c), seminar, response:

> At our seminars I hear all these horror stories about other schools and cooperating teachers. It makes me realize how lucky I am to have such a wonderful school and cooperating teacher.

In the general category of 2) projected thoughts, we've made two distinctions; a) future planning for the remainder of student teaching and b) future planning for when I have my own classroom. A set (a) entry would be:

> Tonight I am working on the aesthetic and critical part of my bead lesson. I am also creating a lesson for my third graders, which I pick up next week. I nixed the book idea, it just never popped for me. We are doing portraits.

A set (b) entry looks like this:

> I want to see signs of thinking. I think higher-order questions are really important, but I don't feel like I have the freedom here to dig for the depth I'm looking for. I'd probably do a bit less production and a bit more concept building when I get my own class.

The category that received the greatest amount of response was, not surprisingly, that of dialogue pertaining to the current classroom situation. The most frequently mentioned theme within all categories was that of behavior and class management issues. This obsession with issues of discipline and management is not uncommon for beginning teachers. Our findings coincide with those of other researchers in general education (see for example, Stallion

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& Zimpher, 1991; Veenman, 1984). An example of the many entries we have read and responded to follows:

> I'm establishing myself firmly and making my expectations clear. They are responding well to the firmness. My insistence on discipline is transferring a serious attitude about art to the students.

Because there are so many entries of this nature we find ourselves continually giving advice and reassuring the students that these issues are sometimes not very easily solved.

Visuals With Text

We have found that several of our students, although by no means the majority, spontaneously use illustrations of themselves or other school related objects or people in their journals. It appears that the use of graphic material is an unconscious impulse that is rarely alluded to in the text of the journal. We were quite taken with Brian's "self-portrait with students" (see fig. 2). We were aware of Brian's unique set of challenges, but the illustration contained emotional content not always visible in his writing, that tended to be more analytic.

Other students have used graphic representations to show traffic flow (see fig. 3), and to give us an idea of what the production phase of a lesson might entail. We have talked about suggesting that students add visuals whenever that mood strikes them, during the next round of students that we journal with. Combining the use of illustration

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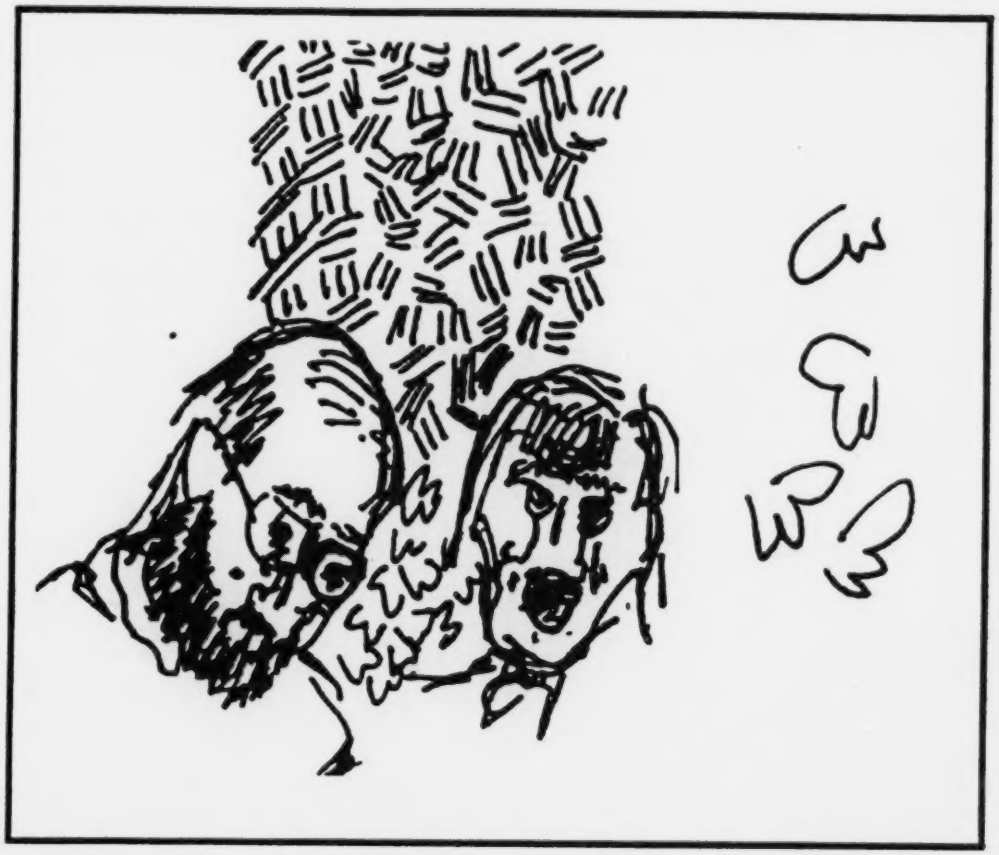

Figure 2

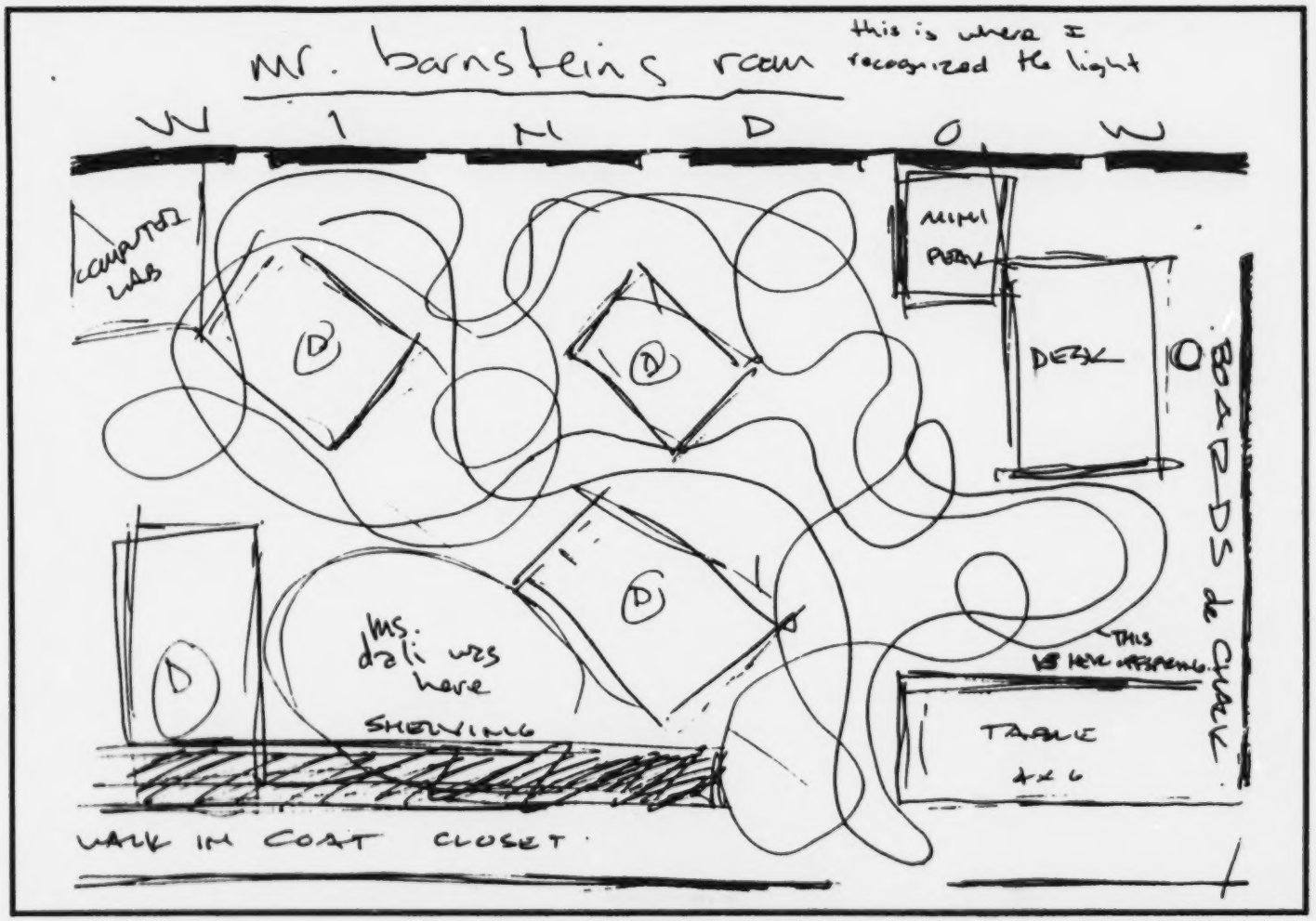
Mr. barnstein's room
this is where I recognized the light
WINDOW
COMPUTER LABS
MINI FRIDGE
DESK
BOARDS de CHARK
Ms. dali was here
SHELVING
THIS IS WHERE OFFERING
TABLE
4x6
WALK IN COAT CLOSET

Figure 3

with writing might serve as a buffer for those who have "writing anxiety".

Metaphors that We Found Interesting

Our students did not often use metaphor when describing their experiences and concerns, and unlike Bullough and Stokes (1994), we did not encourage its use. When used, however, the metaphors were well chosen and touched chords in all three of us. Here are some examples of metaphor.

> I had a new lesson that just sang on Andy Wharhol and one on Elija Pierce that went nowhere. Pacing and motivation were the major difference. I have to switch into a "used car salesman" type of mode and then it works great.

> I had a wonderful day. The kids were good. After I got the basketball players out of the room I actually spent the whole period talking to them and they to me. This is one of those rare teachable moments where the fairy godmother of education sprinkles magic dust on the room.

> I feel like slime. I assigned four detentions today. One of the kids has been testing me all along and wanted to see if I'd follow through on a warning.

> In my next seventh grade lessons I'm trying the "bites method" instead of the "stuffing approach". I'll be giving the information in small portions and keep it to the things that pertain to what they're working on.

The use of metaphor is quite interesting to us and we have talked about suggesting it's use to our students in the future. It might offer an insight to students innermost concerns to which we might not otherwise have access. Additionally, art education students who are more visually inclined might find the metaphor a more adept way to define their images.

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Our Responses

We see our responses as important elements to the dialogue journaling experience, for it is through the dialogue that our students get to know us as well. We are interested in relationship building, not just having a window to the minds and feelings of our students. The collegial atmosphere that we intend to set up with our students is a model that can be extended into the first few years of teaching and beyond with colleagues in the field.

The following are excerpts of our responses to students concerns:

> You're right, I think it's really hard to evaluate high school-aged students work. So much of their self-concept seems connected. Make sure to give them some suggestions for strengthening or improving and give the opportunity for students to re-submit.

> Yeah, it's a good place to start. If everyone just gives up on this kid what are we helping to create?

> Sounds as if you are feeling some positive accomplishments from being structured and organized. Good job! The more WELL ORGANIZED you become the better your student-teacher relationships will be. Really. The kids will notice the difference and they will live up to your high expectations.

We try to be very positive in our responses and try to put ourselves in their shoes. Sometimes we include a suggestion and sometimes we just congratulate or commiserate. We found that students didn't seem to respond to the length of or responses in any consistent way; in other words, some students wrote a great deal and others only a paragraph, and the length of their writing did not appear to bear any relationship to the amount that we wrote.

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However, it appears that students respond well to the individual attention that dialogue journaling affords.

Open-ended or Suggested Topics: Students Evaluations

One of the questions we asked ourselves at the beginning of this study was, would assigned topics help or hinder the dialogue journaling process? In short, we found that it did and it didn't; students who normally wrote a great deal in their journals tended to feel encumbered by assigned topics and those who were less enthusiastic about the journaling process appeared to respond with greater interest. As supervisors, we enjoyed the assigned topics as it gave us the occasional chance to channel the students thinking along a particular path. Here are two students comments about assigned topic entries; one for, one against.

> Journaling was a good way to express myself. Open-ended assignments were easier because it allowed freedom instead of scraping something together for an assignment.

> I preferred structured assignments because often I did not feel like writing. Some of us enjoy writing about our experiences while others (myself) cannot be consistent in writing in any journal.

It is important to note that a majority of students preferred writing open-ended entries and stated that they enjoyed journaling as a whole in a final evaluation. Optional suggested topics is something we've discussed for the future. We have also talked about topics or questions that focus more on art education, such as "What are the ways that art appears to be trivialized or promoted in your specific school", or "Is combining all four (DBAE)

disciplines easy or difficult in your school". We look forward to implementing some of these ideas.

Conclusion

We feel that much can be learned through dialogue journaling with our students. We have learned more about the thoughts and fears of preservice art students and this helps us to be empathic listeners and more effective guides to good teaching practice. The journaling process is a tool with which we have experienced success and our attempts to critically analyze our methods and practice has strengthened its use.

Programs in art education must prepare art teachers to be effective in today's complex and diverse schools. Thus it is necessary to isolate strategies that guide preservice teachers into becoming thoughtful, reflective teachers. Dialogue journaling, if practiced with care and reflection by preservice educators, can be a helpful tool in preparing art teachers to meet the challenges of the future.

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